

Strategy – Revision of Driver Education General Statues

General Description

In North Carolina, young drivers represent a significant hazard and experience higher crash and fatality rates than other age groups which is largely a result of their immaturity combined with their lack of driving experience. The immaturity is readily apparent in young drivers' risky driving behaviors such as speeding, tailgating and driver distractions. At the same time, teenagers' lack of experience behind the wheel makes it difficult for them to recognize and respond to hazards and therefore, they often get into trouble trying to handle unusual driving situations. More often than when older people drive, these situations turn disastrous. Crashes involving young drivers typically are single-vehicle crashes, primarily run-off-the-road crashes that involve driver error and/or speeding.

There needs to be a stronger emphasis on educating our young drivers about the various challenges they will face when they finally get behind the wheel and more importantly how to properly respond to these challenges. Presently, all teenagers are required by law to successfully complete a drivers education program prior to getting their provisional licenses. However, the North Carolina General Statute (§ 20-88.1. Driver Education) that prescribes what must be taught in the driver's education curriculum was last revised in 1997 and does not reflect many of the present issues that young drivers are challenged with. This statute needs to be revised to reflect the following, current issues that should be addressed within the driver's education curriculum.

- General data and statistics related to the representation of young drivers in crashes, injuries and fatalities,
- Lane Departure Crashes – more specifically run off the road situations and how to safely correct,
- Speed,
- Graduated Driver's License,
- Seat Belt Use,
- Cell Phone Use and
- Distracted/Drowsy Driving.

This is presently an important issues, but when considering the current population trends, there will be an even more pressing need as this segment of the population continues to expand. At the national level, there will be 23% more 16-20- year-old drivers on the road in 2010 than there are today -- 26.1 million and with this group suffering 21.5% of fatalities and 15.5% of all reported accidents in North Carolina each year, now is the time to make changes.

Technical Attributes

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| Target | Young drivers taking drivers education courses in North Carolina. |
| Expected Effectiveness | Due to the number of crashes involving young drivers, it is important that the drivers education programs being taught cover core "problem" areas for young drivers. Presently the existing general statute (§ 20-88.1. Driver education) does not require these topics to be addressed. It is anticipated that by revising the existing statute and with the proper educational efforts in these areas, that the number of young drivers involved in |

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| | these types of crashes will decrease. |
| Keys to Success | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful amendment of the existing general statute. • Proper inclusion and instruction of these topics in the drivers education curriculum. • Oversight/review of the revised curriculum by a qualified team prior to its implementation. • Evaluation and modification of the revised curriculum after its implementation. • Support of Driver Education instructors. |
| Potential Difficulties | Development of a core curriculum with the necessary and proper instruction for these core topics. |
| Appropriate Measures and Data | Evaluation of crash data in these areas after implementation. |
| Associated Needs | Mutual understanding and cooperation between the key players: engineering, researchers, and the Department of Public Instruction. |
| Organizational, Institutional, and Policy Issues | Support from upper management of all involved agencies to seek passage of revisions to the current general statute. |
| Issues Affecting Implementation Time | Development of revised curriculums to reflect the changes in the general statute. |
| Costs | Cost should be minimal. |
| Training | Training for the developers of the drivers education curriculum and the instructors may be needed so that they fully understand the issues and thus the message that needs to reach the target audience. |
| Legislative Needs | Change to the current general statute (§ 20-88.1. Driver Education). |